

Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, March 16, 2012

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Action Item Calendar

Today (March 16): Deadline for resolving duplicate enrollments, signed [ADM forms](#)

March 23: Annual [textbook lists](#) due

Extended deadline: March 23: Tech directors to complete PARCC Readiness report (see below)

April 6: Survey on professional-development plans due (see below)

April 13: Deadline for submitting to RIDE [district Teacher of the Year](#) selections

April 20: Estimates of 2012-13 first-year teachers due (see below)

April 27: Recommendations for [Educator Talent Pool](#) due

June 30: Schools and districts submit [final personnel assignments](#)

July 15: Deadline for final reporting of evaluation ratings (see below)

Note: Commissioner Gist encourages you to share this field memo with your curriculum director and with your principals.

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. Assessments must remain a component of the Diploma System

As you may be aware, there is proposed legislation before the General Assembly that would ban the use of standardized assessments as one element of our graduation requirements. This legislation would overturn a vital component of the Diploma System that the Regents revised last year after six months of public hearings and deliberations.

On Wednesday, I testified before the House Health, Education, and Welfare Committee in opposition to this legislation. Here is some of my testimony:

Supporting our students and preparing our graduates for success is a principle that we uphold every day, and this principle is a commitment that I share with those who drafted this legislation.

The heart of our mission as educators in Rhode Island is to ensure that our students graduate from high school ready for success.

We strive to provide our students with:

- Instruction and support of high quality;

- fair graduation requirements; and
- multiple options to demonstrate readiness to graduate.

We have failed in this mission if our students graduate without the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed in college and in challenging careers.

The goal we have set as our most important indicator of progress is that we want all Rhode Island students to graduate ready for success in college, careers, and life. The long-term economic viability of our state depends on how well we achieve this goal.

It is irresponsible of us to allow students to leave high school without the knowledge and skills they need.

Granting diplomas to students who don't have all of the skills they need does our graduates a disservice and denies them the chance to have choices and opportunities before them in life.

Representatives from RISSA and from the Rhode Island Association of School Committees also testified in opposition to this legislation. I welcome any comments or questions you might have on this matter, and of course I would welcome any support you could provide if discussion of this proposal arises in your community.

2. Governor Chafee's Fiscal Year 2013 budget supports education

Also on the legislative front, the General Assembly has begun grappling with Governor Chafee's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2013. Legislative committees have held several hearings on the budget, and more hearings are scheduled in the coming weeks. Yesterday (Thursday, March 15), I testified before the House Education Subcommittee on the education budget. Here is an excerpt from my testimony:

Governor Chafee's Fiscal Year 2013 budget increases aid for education – even in these difficult fiscal times.

The Governor's budget increases overall education funds by \$67 million (to \$913 million).

Most important, the Governor's budget provides \$32.6 million for year two of the funding formula, including \$11 million to accelerate the transition plan for underfunded districts.

This \$11 million will directly help our most financially distressed communities – which have received and continue to receive less than their fair share of education aid every year.

The Governor's budget recognizes that these districts need and deserve additional help right now.

We are pleased that, under the Governor's 2013 budget, the Funding Formula would also provide:

- \$1.5 million for our PreK pilot program, which will build upon the investments in early learning from our Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant;
- \$3 million to support career and technical education; and
- \$500,000 to for high-cost special education commitments.

In addition to the \$500,000 for the categorical high-cost special-education fund, the Governor also recommends \$500,000 to the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) to reduce the costs school districts pay for special education students under the custody of DCYF.

These investments combined provide for a total of \$1 million more for high-cost special-education commitments in Fiscal Year 2013.

Though no doubt the budget will evolve as it moves through the legislative process and toward approval, I will continue to advocate on behalf of the Governor's proposed budget, the Funding Formula, and funding for other initiatives such as the \$20-million technology bond that will provide wireless Internet access to every classroom in Rhode Island.

3. Six high schools to participate in International pilot test

Last week we issued a news release noting that six Rhode Island high schools have been selected to participate in a pilot test that will enable schools to measure their performance against international benchmarks. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which also sponsors the PISA test, is developing this pilot.

In Field Memos last October, I notified you about the opportunity to volunteer for participation in this pilot. I am very pleased that so many of you responded to this opportunity. The OECD selected high schools from four Rhode Island districts to participate: Central Fall, Chariho, East Greenwich, and Pawtucket. I am not sure how many others inquired to the OECD about participation, but I understand that the OECD had some demographic criteria for selecting participants in this pilot test so not all volunteers were selected. Once the pilot is completed, however, I hope that all Rhode Island schools will take advantage of the opportunity to participate in the test, which will benchmark individual school results against the international results from the PISA 2012 test.

Here is a link to our news release on this pilot test:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/OECD_pilot_-_release_-_3-12-12.pdf

From RIDE:

4. Educators encouraged to register for RIDE professional-development opportunity, "Learning and the Brain"

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

All educators are invited to participate in a professional-development opportunity, “Learning and the Brain: the Multiple Pathways Model,” which RIDE is sponsoring on April 26 and 27.

In this exciting presentation loaded with real brain images and scattered with interactive experiences, attendees will actually see how learning takes place in the brain through powerful images and they will discover what is required for that to happen.

Neuroscience indicates that the more pathways by which students encode information, the easier that information is to learn and recall. As educators, we often think of learning pathways as consisting of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. In this workshop, attendees will experience new and exciting pathways that will energize instruction and strategies for accessing these additional pathways in order to reach diverse and struggling learners.

Day 1 consists of a full day of information, experiential activities, and strategies on learning and the brain, the multiple-pathways model.

Day 2 consists of small-group breakouts in which attendees are guided through a series of group activities. These activities first provide additional strategies geared to their specific content area and then scaffold them into creating a model lesson plan that incorporates multiple pathways. After all their hard work, attendees leave energized and ready to immediately apply what they have learned.

Dr. Janet Zadina, the presenter, is an educational neuroscientist who sees brain research through the eyes of a teacher. She is a cognitive neuroscientist with many years of teaching experience at the high-school and community-college level. She bridges the fields of education and neuroscience through her work as a researcher, teacher, author, and international speaker.

She received her doctorate from the College of Education at the University of New Orleans, conducting her award-winning dissertation research on the neuroanatomy of dyslexia, through collaboration with Tulane University School of Medicine. She continued her postdoctoral education with a Fellowship in Cognitive Neuroscience in the Department of Psychiatry and Neurology at the Tulane University School of Medicine, where she researched neuroanatomical risk factors for developmental language disorders through MRI brain scans.

Dr. Zadina has authored many publications, including *Six Weeks to a Brain-Compatible Classroom – A Workbook for Educators*. She is the founder of Brain Research and Instruction and has presented keynotes and workshops domestically and internationally on brain research and instruction.

You can read more about Dr. Zadina at:

<http://www.brainresearch.us/>.

The workshops are scheduled for April 26 and 26, from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. (registration at 8:30 a.m.), at Providence College.
The fee is \$20 for each date attending.

For registration, go to:

<http://www.nric-ri.org/professional-development-academy> (Scroll down to the appropriate workshop and click on the registration links)

Questions may be directed to Bob Measel (robert.measel@ride.ri.gov or 222-8480) or Emily Klein (emily.klein@ride.ri.gov or 222-8985), at RIDE.

5. Draft of Next Generation Science Standards to be posted for review next month

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum and from the Rhode Island State Leadership Team for the Development of Next Generation Science Standards, which was formed as a result of the selection of Rhode Island as a Lead State Partner in the development of the standards:

Next month, the draft Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) will be released nationally for a 3-week public review and comment period. This is an incredibly important opportunity for educators, parents, business people, scientists, engineers – people virtually every facet of the Rhode Island science and engineering education community – to submit comment and to shape the standards that will guide how students will learn science for years to come.

In order to review the draft NGSS effectively, reviewers must have an understanding of the *Framework for K-12 Science Education Practices, Crosscutting Concepts, and Core Ideas* (Framework). You may download a free PDF copy of the Framework at:

http://www7.nationalacademies.org/bose/Standards_Framework_Homepage.html

Besides a link to download the Framework, there are links to other resources such as FAQs, archived webinars, and report briefs. In order to effectively review the draft NGSS, it is necessary to become familiar with the Framework. Once released, the draft NGSS will be available at:

<http://www.nextgenscience.org/>

If you would like receive e-mail announcements about NGSS, please send an e-mail to:

NGSS-L-request@LISTSERV.RI.NET

6. RIDE to seek nominations for new induction coaches; estimates of 2012-13 first-year teachers due April 20 – Action Item

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

We appreciate all of the support and feedback that we received via the survey sent to all building principals who have beginning teachers and induction coaches in their schools. The information that we received is extremely valuable as we continue to monitor the progress of the program.

Recently, upon request, we have been presenting to school committees, to institutions of higher education, and at superintendent staff meetings with principals. Each time we present, we bring an induction coach, a beginning teacher, and a principal, who are able to explain the on-the-ground work of the program. These meetings have been very positive and have helped us begin to build an understanding of the program and sustainability needs. We look forward to doing more of these presentations for any of you who have not taken advantage of this to date but who would like to have this opportunity.

Within the next two weeks, we will be posting and sending out application packets for induction coaches. We will again be looking for nominations from you, principals, and others. We are looking for teachers who are highly effective and have a strong ability to work with colleagues. As superintendent of schools, you will need to sign off on the packet confirming that, if chosen, you will allow the educator to be released from your district to serve as a full-release induction coach. The coaches will again be assigned to beginning teachers in your district first. What a wonderful way to build district capacity for supporting beginning teachers! Teachers receiving layoff notices due to financial restraints are not exempt from this process; however, additional discussions would be needed.

It is critical that we receive your projected or estimated number of new hires for the 2012-13 school year by April 20. We know that these numbers are not final, but it will be of great help as we recruit new induction coaches for next year. In this projection, please include the number of 1st-year teachers you anticipate hiring next year as well as any 1st-year teacher who was hired late and did not receive induction support this year. Based on our current projection of beginning teachers next year, we are anticipating that we will need about 4 or 5 more induction coaches. Over the next couple of weeks, you will begin to see application and nomination materials for induction coach positions.

As mentioned previously, we are trying to build coaching capacity within districts across the state to support new teachers as well as to support educators on improvement plans. A way that we will be able to do this is to open a limited number of spaces in our induction-coach training. We would like you to think about affording teachers in your districts, such as mentors, teacher leaders, and instructional coaches, the opportunity to attend full induction-coach training. Having other faculty members trained in the skills and strategies needed to successfully support teachers will allow districts and RIDE to build even more capacity. Interested candidates will need to go through the rigorous interview process to ensure they possess the skills and characteristics required to be an effective coach, and they would also need to be available for training sessions throughout the school year.

As always, if you have any questions or feedback, do not hesitate to contact Hilda or Donna:

Hilda Potrzeba, at hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov or 222-8891
Donna Okrasinski, at donna.okrasinski@ride.ri.gov or 222-8982

7. Virtual Learning Math Modules to be ready for summer programs

Please see this notice from our Office of Multiple Pathways:

We would like to thank those who volunteered to pilot the Virtual Learning Math Modules (VLMM) this spring. The selected schools have been notified: Mt. Hope High School (Bristol Warren), Dr. Earl F. Calcutt Middle school and Central Falls Senior High School, Cranston High School East, and North Kingstown Senior High School.

We encourage you to consider implementing the VLMM Summer 2012 Scale-up to support students working toward math proficiency. Professional development for those interested in the summer implementation will be held in June. Please e-mail Lauren McCarthy (lauren.mccarthy@ride.ri.gov) if you are interested in participating in the summer phase of VLMM as part of your summer-school program.

We will inform all schools interested in the VLMM Summer 2012 Scale-up about the professional-development details as well as about the number of students who may be able to access the summer phase of the VLMM project. Schools can start to identify potential students who would benefit from engaging in the math modules whether you choose to participate in the summer or to wait to begin this project in the fall. Potential students may include students in grades 8 through 11 who have not attained partial proficiency on the NECAP math assessment. Priority should be given to those 11th-grade students who scored Substantially Below Proficient (SBP) on the recent NECAP assessment. Additional students who are SBP as measured by NECAP and by coursework should be selected from the 10th grade, 9th grade, and 8th grade.

The VLMM are intended to be one of the supports that schools may use as part of a student's progress plan. RIDE will be providing details and handouts of the VLMM program that may be used to inform students and families of this opportunity to support math proficiency. These handouts should be available mid-May in a variety of formats.

8. RIDE seeking vendor proposals for all-inclusive wireless classrooms devices

Please see this notice from our Office of Multiple Pathways:

There are numerous efforts and investments that have been made at the national, state, and local level, all of which demand and assume access to technology. Currently, Rhode Island has approximately 140,000 students and 40,000 computing devices. Placement and configuration in each school varies greatly, resulting in limited access. To help address the equity-and-access issue facing all schools, RIDE is requesting proposals from

qualified vendors to provide personal, portable computing devices. The vendor selected to provide an “all-inclusive” wireless classroom solution will enter into a Master Price Agreement (MPA) with the State of Rhode Island. All LEAs and schools will be able to opt in to this opportunity. Vendors are directed to access the LOI information on the State Purchasing site; however you can access a PDF copy on the RIDE website, at:

www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/VL/TechOps/All_Inclusive/All_Inclusive.aspx

Details will be updated on this web page on a regular basis as we progress through this process. Please check back often.

9. RIDE posts FAQs on revisions to compulsory-attendance law

Please see this notice from our Office of Multiple Pathways:

RIDE has created a frequently asked questions (FAQs) document to provide answers that address common concerns and questions regarding the revisions to the Compulsory Attendance Statute (RIGL §16-19-1). The intent of the revised law is to prevent students from dropping out and being placed into truancy court.

RIDE has received numerous questions from LEAs and alternative learning programs, primarily adult-education programs, regarding the implications of the revisions to the Compulsory Attendance Statute. Students may seek a waiver of attendance from their resident school if they are in an approved alternative-learning program. The FAQ document provides initial guidance to LEAs and to alternative-program providers about roles and responsibilities, and it also provides a simple procedure guide to be followed before an alternative-learning plan can be approved. The FAQ document is available on our website, at:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/omp/secondary/sec_regs.aspx.

If you have additional questions, please contact Sharon Lee (sharon.lee@ride.ri.gov).

10. RIDE to collect aggregate final evaluation ratings

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

During the current school year, RIDE will collect aggregate final evaluation ratings for teachers and building administrators (e.g., 10 teachers were rated Highly Effective; 50 teachers were rated Effective; 30 teachers were rated Developing; and 10 teachers were rated ineffective) from every LEA, regardless of the educator-evaluation system being implemented. The ratings are being collected for federal reporting purposes only. Later this spring, RIDE will provide LEAs with a template for reporting aggregate final evaluation ratings, and the deadline for reporting final ratings is July 15. In future years, educator-evaluation ratings will be collected through the Educator Performance and Support System.

11. RIDE to hold regional meetings to discuss refinement of the Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation System

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

RIDE will hold four regional meetings next month to discuss refinement of the Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation System (Rhode Island Model) for teachers and building administrators, including the Student Learning Objectives process that applies to all LEAs. At the meetings, representatives from RIDE will discuss the major priorities for revising the Rhode Island Model, including the specific building-administrator and teacher feedback that led to these priorities. The regional meetings are intended for LEA building and district leaders and union leaders, and the meetings will take place from 4 to 6 p.m. on April 9, 10, 24, and 26. Specific locations for the regional meetings will be shared in an upcoming Field Memo. A webinar for teachers that will focus on refinement of the Rhode Island Model is also being planned for the spring.

12. RIDE provides information on Summer Training Academies for evaluators

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

All personnel in LEAs responsible for implementing the Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation System for teachers or building administrators are required to attend the upcoming Summer Academies. The Summer Academies represent the second phase of training for evaluators and are distinct from the evaluation training modules offered during the 2011-12 school year. In preparation for full implementation, the Summer Academies will provide participants with an in-depth exploration of topics, and the academies will address model revisions, including the integration of the Educator Performance and Support System.

13. RIDE shares additional scoring guidance for Student Learning Objectives

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

A Student Learning Objective (SLO) scoring guide has been developed to assist evaluators with end-of-year scoring. This guide describes the process for scoring individual SLOs and for scoring SLO sets. Guidance is also provided to help clarify what should occur with SLOs before, during, and after the End-of-Year Conference. The SLO scoring guide was adapted from the *Guide to Evaluating Building Administrators and Teachers*, and it can be found on the SLO page of the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/SLO.aspx>

14. RIDE to host webinar on the new Educator Performance and Support System

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

From 4 to 5:30 p.m. on April 4, RIDE will conduct an informational webinar about the Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS). The webinar will provide participants a detailed overview of the EPSS, including, information on how the system will support educator evaluation and integrate with other key applications, system development and training timelines, and information about how districts can be involved in ongoing feedback sessions throughout the spring and the next school year. Participants may register for this session at:

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/760803534>

15. Public invited to program with nationally recognized parent organizers

Please see this notice from our Office of Transformation:

Providence Superintendent Susan Lusi and the Providence Public Schools invite you to join a conversation with nationally recognized parent organizers Joanna Brown, Leticia Barrera, and Christina Torres from the Logan Square Neighborhood Association, Chicago.

The event will take place on **Thursday** (March 22), from 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m., at the Providence Family Resource Center, 379 Washington St.

The Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA), which turns 50 this year, serves the 80,000 population of its Northwest Chicago neighborhood. In the past 15 years, LSNA has built a national reputation by transforming schools into “community schools” with deep parent engagement fostered through its Community Learning Centers and Parent Mentor programs. LSNA’s members consist of 44 neighborhood organizations, including 10 public schools with more than 7,000 students, most of them from low-income Latino immigrant families. The Parent Mentor program was the subject of *A Cord of Three Strands: A New Approach to Parent Engagement in Schools* (2011), by Professor Soo Hong, of Wellesley. LSNA also has a Grow Your Own Teacher program, which has expanded into a statewide program with 16 sites around Illinois.

The speakers at the event will be:

Leticia Barrera, LSNA Education Organizer, began at LSNA as a Parent Mentor in 1997 and is now a Lead Parent Trainer. Since 2000, she has been on full-time staff at LSNA, mentoring at least 600 parents and building relationships with school staff. Formerly a teacher in Mexico, she is studying to receive her teaching credentials in Chicago through LSNA’s Grow Your Own project. She is bilingual in Spanish and English. She is part of the new Parent Engagement Institute, which is developing new parent-mentor programs in 13 new schools outside the Logan Square neighborhood.

Joanna Brown is Lead Education Organizer at the LSNA, where she has worked since 1993. She has 30 years of experience in community organizing, community

journalism and public relations; urban affairs; and politics. She was professionally and personally involved in Chicago's first school-reform elections, serving two terms (1989-93) as a local School Council member. Her two children attended Inter-American, a Chicago public dual-language elementary school.

Christina Torres is a parent activist with the LSNA and a trainer with LSNA's new Parent Engagement Institute. Christina began her involvement in the Logan Square community as a Parent Mentor in her children's school. She is a leader in her children's school and in Chicago school-reform campaigns.

Light refreshments, Spanish translation, and activities for children ages 5 to 12 will be provided.

For more information and to RSVP, please contact Janet Pichardo, at janet.pichardo@ppsd.org or 456-0686.

16. RIDE opens survey on LEA professional-development plans – *Action Item*

Please see the following request from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

Earlier this week, RIDE hosted a webinar to discuss professional-development planning related to our new initiatives on interim assessments, formative assessments, data use, the Instructional Management System, and other topics. As you may know, in addition to the professional development associated with Educator Evaluation and Study of the Standards, there is additional training associated with the new technology-based systems that we are about to launch. In order to begin scheduling the professional-development opportunities, we are requesting that each LEA complete the survey at the link below by **April 6**, indicating your intended plans for professional development regarding these new initiatives.

Please click on the link below to view the PowerPoint presentation and webinar recording.

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/assessment/DivisionUpdates.aspx>

Please click on this link to access the survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PD_Offerings_Follow-up_Survey

17. SurveyWorks student, teacher/staff, administrator surveys extended through March 30

Please see the following message from our Office of Data, Analysis, and Research:

The deadline for schools to complete the student, teacher/instructional staff, and administrator surveys has been extended through Friday, March 30. RIDE staff will be reaching out in the next few days to superintendents and principals in schools with low rates for these surveys.

These surveys are mapped to the Basic Education Program (BEP). They cover instructional practices, school climate, health and safety, professional-development needs, school decision-making, resources, and family involvement – issues about which, in some cases, we have very few other sources of data. To get as complete and accurate a picture as possible, please make every effort to have students, teachers and instructional staff, and building administrators complete their surveys within the next two weeks.

If you have any questions, please contact Jan Mermin, at Jan.Mermin@ride.ri.gov or 222-4710. Thank you again for your help with this important initiative.

18. Annual classification of schools delayed

Please see the following message from our Office of Data, Analysis, and Research:

As you know, RIDE has proposed to revise its statewide accountability system in a request submitted to the U.S. Department of Education seeking flexibility regarding provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act. The proposal seeks a new system for classification of schools and for providing support to those schools that miss their annual targets.

Under this new accountability system, RIDE will:

- focus on achievement gaps;
- diagnose school performance by identifying specific shortcomings and achievements at each school;
- provide information to schools and districts to help them identify specific supports and interventions need to improve student achievement; and
- provide these schools with the ability to select interventions that respond to their context and their needs.

While we are waiting for approval of the proposed new system, the annual Classifications of Schools documents that are usually released March 15 will be delayed. We will notify LEAs when our ESEA proposed new accountability system has been approved, and at that time we will give you a timeline for our release of school classifications.

Our request for flexibility under No Child Left Behind is posted on our website, at:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/DOCUMENTS/2012/ESEA/RI_ESEA_Flexibility_Request_02282012_Final.pdf

19. Technology directors asked to complete PARCC Readiness report by March 23 – *Action Item*

Please see the following message from our Office of Data, Analysis, and Research:

A PARCC Readiness Assessment Tool User Spreadsheet has been posted on the RIDE website on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) page:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/PARCC.aspx> (see the Resources tab)

and on the Transition to the Common Core page:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Division-EEIE/transition.aspx> (see the PARCC tab).

District Technology Directors should complete this form by **March 23** and identify all technology staff who will be conducting the readiness assessment in schools. Once completed, this form should be e-mailed to Michael Ferry, at Michael.Ferry@ride.ri.gov.

This collection is the first step to determine if schools are ready to administer the PARCC tests in 2014.

From the U.S. Department of Education:

20. Department releases data tool to help high-school officials increase college accessibility

Please see this announcement from the Press Office:

The U.S. Department of Education has released a new tool that will help high school counselors and school leaders by giving them a resource to monitor FAFSA completions and better help students access higher education. School officials can now track FAFSA submission and completion statistics at individual high schools on the [FAFSA Completion website](#), which will help them ensure that their students are filling out the FAFSA and therefore are able to determine their eligibility for federal student aid – a key factor in families' college decisions.

The complete news release is available here:

<http://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/USED-3309c7>

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>